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UNCLAS FRANKFURT 009252

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: Baden-Wuerttemberg Minister-President To Step Down  
in 2005; State Minister Palmer Resigns

REF: A) 03 Frankfurt 10353, B) Frankfurt 5551, C) Frankfurt  
6002, D) Frankfurt 6769, E) Frankfurt 7197, F) Frankfurt  
9139

Sensitive but unclassified; not for internet distribution.

1. (U) SUMMARY: Baden-Wuerttemberg (B-W) Minister President Erwin Teufel announced October 25 that he will relinquish the offices of Minister-President and CDU state chairman as of April 2005. Strife over designating a successor will complicate local politics and life for the national CDU. Baden-Wuerttemberg State Minister Christoph Palmer resigned after a physical altercation with CDU Bundestag member Joachim Pfeiffer during an argument over Teufel's future. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Baden-Wuerttemberg Minister-President Teufel (CDU / Christian Democrats) announced at an October 25 press conference that he would step down as minister-president and state party chairman as of April 19, 2005. Teufel will retain his mandate in the Baden-Wuerttemberg state parliament until the end of the legislative period (May 2006). His decision follows months of infighting and pressure on Teufel to make way for new leadership (reftels). At the press conference, Teufel insisted that his decision to retire was personal and voluntary, noting that "it would be unbearable for me if the B-W citizens gain the impression that I am glued to my chair."

3. (SBU) At the same press conference, State Minister Christoph Palmer announced his resignation following a physical altercation with CDU Bundestag representative Joachim Pfeiffer at a weekend election event for Stuttgart Lord Mayor Wolfgang Schuster (re-elected October 24 with 53.3% of the vote). At the event, Palmer angrily confronted Pfeiffer over his participation in a Bundestag caucus straw poll against Teufel (ref F), striking the Bundestag member twice in the face. At the press conference the following day, Palmer took responsibility for the scuffle and tendered his immediate resignation. NOTE: Palmer -- until now regarded as a rising force within the B-W CDU -- oversaw relations with the U.S. (including U.S. forces) in his role as head of the State Chancellery. END NOTE.

4. (SBU) Teufel's resignation is the result of months of controversy and mud-slinging which have hampered the political process in Baden-Wuerttemberg (reftels). The succession debate is focused on two contenders: State Minister of Culture and Education Annette Schavan and CDU caucus chief Guenther Oettinger. Although Teufel has hinted publicly at support for Schavan, Oettinger enjoys the public backing of most other groups within the state party. In an October 25 meeting with CG, State Secretary Rudolf Boehmler opined that while Oettinger has a strong base within the party, Schavan has a higher public profile as state education minister since 1995. The two contenders have agreed to put the question to the CDU membership in state-wide balloting. Public opinion polls give Oettinger a small lead (favored by 22% of those polled, versus 16% for Schavan) but the majority of the public remains undecided. Internet polls in the wake of Teufel's announcement gave Oettinger a wider popular lead of 17 to 20 points.

COMMENT

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5. (U) With the succession question still open -- and likely to play out in the coming days -- state politics in Baden-Wuerttemberg will remain in flux for the near future. Moreover, the decision to poll the party membership has created a furor within the local and national CDU and with the CSU, further complicating the party's efforts to resolve intra- and extra-mural strife in advance of the CSU and CDU party conventions in mid-November and early December. END COMMENT.

BODDE